SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MASS MEDIA ON VOTER PREFERENCES IN THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTION

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Abstract
This research aims to explore in depth how mass media shapes voter preferences in the 2024 General Election in Indonesia. The method used in this research is qualitative with a case study approach. This study analyzes the social construction carried out by the mass media on political issues, candidates and political parties. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with voters and analysis of mass media content. The research results show that mass media has the power to shape voter preferences through framing , agenda setting , and priming . Mass media not only functions as a transmitter of information, but also as an agent of social construction that can influence voters' perceptions and decisions in determining their political choices.
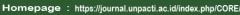
Keywords: Social construction , Mass Media, Voter Preferences.

INTRODUCTION

General elections are one of the main pillars in a democratic system that allows citizens to choose their leaders. In this information era, mass media has a very vital role in facilitating the democratic process. Mass media, both print and digital, are the main source of information for the public regarding candidates, political parties and developing political issues. Therefore, understanding how mass media shapes voter preferences is important in the context of the 2024 General Election in Indonesia.

Mass media is a means of disseminating information very quickly, so that the process of social construction can occur quickly and massively . Social construction carried out by mass media includes various communication techniques designed to shape voter perceptions and attitudes. One of the main techniques is framing , in which mass media select and highlight certain aspects of political reality to form a desired narrative. Social construction by mass media can be interpreted as the way the media shapes and influences people's views and behavior through the news and content presented. The media not only conveys information, but also frames issues and events in a certain way, determines the agenda (agenda setting) that should attract public attention, and places emphasis (priming) on certain aspects of an issue or candidate. These three concepts, framing , agenda setting , and priming, are basic in understanding the influence of mass media on voter preferences.

Framing is the process by which the media selects certain aspects of a complex reality and presents them in a particular context to shape public understanding. For example, the media may choose to highlight a candidate's economic policies or their personal scandals,

which will influence how the candidate is perceived by voters. Agenda setting is the media's ability to influence what issues the public considers important. If the media continuously reports about corruption, then the issue will be considered important by the public and influence their choices in elections. Priming , on the other hand, is the process by which the media emphasizes certain characteristics of an issue or candidate that voters will focus their attention on when they make decisions.

In the 2024 General Election, mass media in Indonesia will have a very large role in shaping political discourse. With so many digital media platforms available, information can spread quickly and widely, but it also opens up opportunities for the spread of disinformation and fake news. Therefore, understanding how mass media contributes to shaping voter preferences is critical to ensuring a fair and informative election process. Mass media has a very large role in the democratic process, especially in shaping public opinion and voter preferences. In the context of the 2024 General Election in Indonesia, mass media not only functions as a source of information, but as a social construction tool that can influence voter perceptions and decisions.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with 20 voters selected purposively and content analysis of five main mass media in Indonesia (Kompas, Tempo, Detik, CNN Indonesia, and Liputan6). In-depth interviews were conducted to explore voters' perceptions regarding the influence of mass media on their preferences. Content analysis was carried out to identify framing , agenda setting and priming patterns used by the mass media in reporting related to the 2024 General Election.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the current digital era, mass media has a very significant role in shaping social construction in society, especially in the context of elections. Mass media not only functions as a source of information, but also as a tool for forming public opinion and voter preferences. Mass media's social construction of voter preferences in the 2024 General Election is a complex phenomenon and involves various mechanisms and communication strategies.

Mass media, both print and electronic, actively frame and interpret various political issues and candidates in elections. Through the process of selecting, emphasizing and presenting news, the mass media is able to influence voters' perceptions and attitudes towards competing candidates. Framing is one of the main strategies used by the media to highlight certain aspects of a candidate, thereby influencing how the candidate is perceived by the public. Through consistent and intense reporting about a candidate's integrity, positive perceptions will be formed
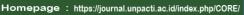
which will then influence voter preferences. (Elva Retnawati, Irawan Suntoro, 2014).

Apart from that, agenda setting or agenda setting by the mass media also plays an important role in determining issues that are considered important by society. The mass media has the power to set issue priorities, so that certain issues receive more attention from the public. In the context of the 2024 General Election, issues such as the economy, education and health raised by the media can be determining factors in voter preferences. In other words, mass media not only directs public attention to certain issues, but also shapes society's frame of mind in assessing the relevance and urgency of these issues.

It cannot be denied that social media as part of mass media is also increasingly influential in shaping voter preferences. Through platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, political information can spread quickly and widely, and enable direct interaction between candidates and voters. The existence of influencers and digital campaigns also strengthens the social construction formed by mass media. Candidates who are able to use social media effectively are superior in attracting the attention and sympathy of voters, especially the younger generation who are more familiar with digital technology. (Cheung, 2021)

Media such as Kompas, Tempo, Detik, CNN Indonesia, and Liputan6 have a significant influence in the social construction process that determines voter preferences. Through their news, coverage and analysis, these media not only convey information, but also shape public opinion and people's perceptions of political candidates and issues. Kompas is known as one of the oldest and most influential newspapers in Indonesia. (Utami, 2016). With a reputation as a trusted media, Kompas is often considered a credible source of information by its readers. Kompas' in-depth and data-based coverage helps voters get a comprehensive picture of the candidates and the issues they are facing. The use of formal language and an analytical writing style contributes to forming an educated and critical public opinion.

Tempo, with its investigative and critical approach, often reveals hidden sides of the world of politics and candidates that are not covered by other media. Tempo's investigative reports provide a deeper understanding of the background and track candidates' records , which can influence voter preferences. Apart from that, Tempo's firm and straightforward writing style makes readers more alert and think critically about existing political issues. Apart from that, " **Detik News"** as a leading online media , providing news at high speed and easy access. Detik is able to reach a wider audience , especially the millennial generation and Gen Z who tend to access information via digital devices. With fast and varied news updates , Detik

allows voters to always be informed about the latest developments in the campaign and political dynamics. Even though the writing style is sometimes simpler, this actually makes the information easier for the wider public to digest. (Alfiyani, 2018).
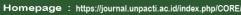
Meanwhile, CNN Indonesia offers a more global perspective with international journalistic standards. Its coverage tends to be objective and factual, providing a more balanced point of view in political reporting. By utilizing modern broadcasting technology, CNN Indonesia presents news with visuals and in-depth analysis, thereby helping voters understand the context of each political issue discussed, and Liputan6 combines online and television news formats, making it a flexible and accessible source of information. various levels of society. With a more humanistic approach and stories that are close to everyday life, Liputan6 is able to convey political information in a form that is easier to understand and relevant to voters. Special election programs presented by Liputan6 also help increase voter participation by providing clear and detailed information about the election process. (Ravary et al., 2019).

Framing

Mass media uses various frames to shape political narratives. Dominant frames include candidate personalization , economic issues, and integrity. For example, the media often highlights personal aspects of candidates, such as family background and personal character, to build a positive or negative image. Mass media framing is an important concept in the study of political communication which is related to the way the media frames news and information to influence the audience's perception and understanding . In the context of the 2024 General Election, mass media framing plays a major role in shaping voter preferences through selective news presentation, emphasis on certain aspects of an issue, and the interpretation given to political events. Through framing , the media not only conveys information, but also directs audiences to see political issues from a certain point of view, which in turn can influence their voting decisions. (Siregar, 2018).

Social constructions formed by mass media play a significant role in shaping voters' views and attitudes towards presidential and vice presidential candidates. The media has the ability to frame candidates in a particular way, for example by highlighting leadership qualities, experience or scandals they may be associated with. By choosing what is reported and how it is reported, the media can shape narratives that influence how voters view the candidates. For example, a candidate who is often reported in a negative context tends to be seen as less competent than a candidate who is reported in a positive context. (Schrape, 2011).

Voter preferences in the 2024 General Election are strongly influenced by how the media frames key issues such as the economy, security and foreign policy. For example,

if the media pays more attention to economic issues and highlights the success of the current government's economic policies, voters may be more inclined to support candidates who are seen as capable of continuing those successes. On the other hand, if the media reports more on security issues in a negative tone, this could benefit candidates who offer firm solutions to security problems. In the 2024 General Election, the mass media has succeeded in framing issues that are relevant to voters. This framing occurs in various forms, including through the use of certain words, the construction of sentences, and the placement of news on the front page or in special sections.
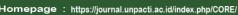
Agenda Setting

The mass media plays a role in determining issues that are considered important by the public. In the 2024 General Election, issues such as corruption, the economy and education will be the main focus of news. This reflects the media's efforts to influence the public agenda and voters' priorities. Mass media agenda setting is a concept in communication studies that describes how the media influences the public to pay attention to certain issues. In the context of the 2024 general election, the agenda- setting role of the mass media becomes very crucial. The mass media has the ability to highlight certain issues and direct voters' attention to topics that are considered important. This can indirectly shape voters' preferences by determining what issues should be prioritized in their political decisions.

The social construction of mass media related to agenda setting involves a process in which the media not only reports facts, but also provides certain interpretations and frameworks (framing). In elections, the media can present candidates and campaign issues in a particular light, both positive and negative. This framing plays an important role in shaping voters' perceptions about the quality and capabilities of candidates, as well as the relevance of the issues raised by the candidates. For example, if the mass media consistently highlights economic issues as the main problem, then voters will tend to prioritize these issues in making voting decisions. (Randyca et al., 2024).

Voter preferences are strongly influenced by how the media constructs social and political reality. Voters who are exposed to media that has a particular bias may develop preferences that align with the views promoted by that media. Therefore, understanding agenda setting and the social construction of mass media is important for candidates in designing their political communication strategies. Candidates who are able to use the media to direct public attention to issues that benefit them have a greater chance of winning voter support. (Fermana & Zetra, 2022).

In an increasingly complex and fragmented political landscape, mass media agenda setting also faces its own challenges. The advent of social media and digital platforms has changed the way voters get information and form opinions. In this digital era, traditional media is no longer the only source of information, but must compete with various platforms which are often faster in delivering news. This creates an information ecosystem that is more diverse but also more vulnerable to disinformation and manipulation.

However, although social media plays a significant role, traditional media still has a large influence in shaping the public agenda. News from traditional media is often the source that social media relies on to spread further information. Thus, traditional media still has control in determining the issues that will become the main focus of public discussion. (Nurlimah, 2011).

Candidates in the 2024 general election must be careful in managing relations with the mass media to ensure their campaign messages and issues are well received by the public. This involves a communications strategy that includes news management, interaction with journalists, as well as the use of social media to amplify campaign messages. Candidates who are successful in managing agenda setting through mass media can increase their visibility, shape public opinion, and ultimately, influence voter preferences.

Apart from that, it is important for voters to have good media literacy so they can criticize the information they receive and are not easily influenced by media bias. Media literacy helps voters understand how the media works, recognize bias, and make more informed decisions. With more critical and informed voters, the quality of democracy will also improve.

Priming

Through priming , the mass media emphasizes certain aspects of an issue or candidate that can influence voters' judgments. For example, emphasizing a candidate's experience and achievements in the news can increase the perception of their competence in the eyes of voters. Mass media priming is a concept that refers to how mass media can influence public attention and assessment of certain issues through the way information is presented. In the context of the 2024 general election, mass media priming has an important role in shaping voter preferences. Through choosing topics, points of view and frequency of reporting, mass media can direct voters' focus on specific issues that are considered important, thereby influencing their perceptions and decisions in the voting booth.

Mass media function as agents of social construction that are able to shape social reality through the way they present news. In this process, the media not only reports facts, but also frames information in a certain way so as to shape public interpretation. For example, if the mass media consistently highlights corruption issues involving a particular candidate, this can influence voters' perceptions of that candidate's integrity. On the other hand, if the media reports more on the achievements and work programs of other candidates, voters tend to have a positive view of that candidate. (Bungin, 2000).

priming is also closely related to agenda setting , where the media has the power to determine what issues the public considers important. In the 2024 general election, issues such as the economy, security and health will probably be the main topics prioritized by the media. By placing these issues at the forefront of the news, the mass media can influence voters to evaluate candidates based on their performance in addressing these issues. This shows that mass media not only influences what the public thinks, but also how they think about certain issues. (Arifin, 2023).

Thus, mass media priming has a significant impact on voter preferences in the 2024 general election. Voters who are exposed to intensive and selective mass media coverage will tend to form preferences based on the issues highlighted by the media. Therefore, understanding this priming mechanism is important for candidates and their campaign teams to develop effective communication strategies and be able to direct public attention in the desired direction.

Influence on Voter Preferences

Interviews with voters reveal that the mass media has a major influence in shaping their preferences. Most respondents admitted that media coverage influenced their views on candidates and political issues. The mass media is considered a credible source of information, so that the narratives constructed by the media are often accepted and internalized by voters. (Santoso, 2016).

Mass media has a significant role in shaping voter preferences in the 2024 general election. Through various channels such as television, radio, newspapers and digital platforms, mass media is the main source of information for the public in obtaining news related to competing candidates. Information conveyed by the mass media can influence voters' perceptions of a candidate's abilities, integrity and vision and mission, thereby determining their political choices. The influence of mass media on voter preferences can be seen from how the mass media conveys news, opinions and political analysis that influence voters' views and decisions. (Sumardi et al., 2023).

Mass media functions as a disseminator of information about candidates and their work programs. Through reporting by the mass media, voters get the information they need to make the right decisions. Mass media often conduct interviews, candidate debates, and campaign coverage that provide a comprehensive picture of the candidates' vision and mission. The information conveyed by the mass media helps voters get to know each candidate's character and capabilities more closely.

Mass media also has the ability to shape public opinion through framing and agenda setting . The way the mass media packages news and certain issues can influence voters' perceptions of a candidate or political party. For example, news coverage that more frequently highlights a candidate's weaknesses can reduce his or her popularity with voters. Conversely, consistent positive reporting can improve the candidate's image. Therefore, the influence of mass media on voter preferences in the 2024 general election cannot be ignored. Mass media is a powerful tool in shaping public opinion and influencing people's political decisions. (Mukti & Asriadi, 2023).

Thus, mass media's social construction of voter preferences in the 2024 general election not only reflects the complexity of current politics and media, but also demands active participation from all parties in maintaining the integrity and transparency of the democratic process. Voters who are intelligent and knowledgeable about these dynamics can act as agents of change in ensuring that the 2024 general elections are fair and democratic..

CONCLUSION

This research shows that mass media has a very crucial role in shaping voter preferences in the 2024 General Election, through framing , agenda setting , and priming . Mass media not only functions as a transmitter of information, but also as an agent of social construction that can influence voter perceptions and decisions.

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